

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2669

INFO USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMELWOKPLSSANTIAGO

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 7515

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BL

SUBJECT: WILES AND PEREDA MEET AGAINST BACKDROP OF MILITARY
PLOTING

1. SUMMARY: IN RECENT DAYS, THE MAJOR OPPOSITION GROUPS HAVE
MOVED CLOSED TO AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE DEMOCRATIZATION PLANS OF
THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT. DISPLAYING NEW FLEXIBILITY, HERNAN
SILES OPENED A DIALOGUE WITH PRESIDENT PEREDA ON SEPTEMBER 10; THIS
WAS FOLLOWED ON SEPTEMBER 11 BY TALKS BETWEEN PEREDA AND TOP
MEMBERS OF THE PDC. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE SILES-PEREDA MEETING
WAS PRECIPITATED IN PART BY SILES' FEAR THAT "GENERATIONALIST"
MILITARY OFFICERS WERE ON THE VERGE OF ATTEMPTING A COUP--A MOVE
SILES BELIEVED WOULD PLACE DEMOCRATIZATION IN JEOPARDY. END SUMMARY

2. CORDIAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE, THE SEPTEMBER 10 SILES-PEREDA
MEETING CENTERED ON THE UDP'S AND THE GOVERNMENT'S DIFFERING
VIEWS ON DEMOCRATIZATION. ALTHOUGH NOTHING SPECIFIC WAS
REVOLVED, IT ESTABLISHED A FRESH CLIMATE OF COOPERATION. SUB-
SEQUENTLY, BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE UDP ISSUED CAREFULLY-
MODULATED COMMUNIQUE, EACH OF WHICH WAS COORDINATED BY THE
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OTHER SIDE. PERHAPS TAKING THEIR CUE FROM THE DUP, TOP MEMBERS
OF THE PDC INVITED INTERIOR MINISTER FAUSTINO RICO TORO TO MEET
WITH THEM THE NEXT DAY. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, THE PDC
LEADERS AND RICO TORO MOVED TO THE PEREDA RESIDENCE, WHERE THE TALKS
CONTINUED. ACCORDING TO THEIR SUBSEQUENT RELEASE, THE PDC LEADERS
DISCUSSED THE PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION WITHIN THE FRAME-
WORK OF THE AUGUST 23 OPPOSITION COMMUNIQUE AND REQUESTED

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES FOR FIVE PEASANT SYMPATHIZERS CURRENTLY UNDER DETENTION. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY A GOVERNMENT SOURCE THAT THE MEETING WENT EXTREMELY WELL, AND THAT THE PDC LEADERS WERE IN FACT MORE TEMPERATE THAN THEIR COMMUNIQUE INDICATES.

3. MNR-PRA ALLIANCE LEADER VICTOR PAZ IESTNSSORO, WHO IS STILL VACATIONING IN TARIJA, HAS NOT YET MET WITH PEREDA. ON SEPTEMBER 11, HOWEVER, ALLIANCE SPOKESMAN EDWIN RODRIGUEZ, APPARENTLY IRKED THAT THE UDP AND THE PDC HAD INITIATED TALKS WITH PEREDA WITHOUT CONSULTING THE OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS, REITERATED THE AUGUST 23 COMMUNIQUE'S DEMAND FOR ELECTIONS WITHIN THE FIRST SEMESTER OF 1979. DESPITE HIS PUBLIC BLUSTER, RODRIQUEZ HAS TOLD US THAT THIS IS NOT THE PAZESTENSSORISTA'S FINAL POSITION, AND THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT A LATER ELECTION DATE IF NECESSARY. RODRIQUEZ ADDED THAT HE HAS URGED PAZ TO RETURN TO LA PAZ AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO MEET WITH PEREDA.

4. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT THE EILES-PEREDA TALK TOOK PLACE AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF MILITARY PLOTTING AND INTRIGUE. ACCORDING TO A RELIABLE UDP SOURCE, ON ABOUT SEPTEMBER 8, MNRI PARTY MEMBER HORACIO TORRES ARRANGED A MEETING BETWEEN SILES AND ARMY LTC RAUL LOPEZ LEIGHTON (CURRENTLY OPERATIONS OFFICER IN CAMIRI) AT THE LATTER'S REQUEST. LOPEZ TOLD SILES THAT ELEMENTS OF THE GENERATIONAL GROUP, LED BY LOPEZ, WERE PREPARED TO MOVE AGAINST PEREDA DURING THE WEEKEND OF SEPTEMBER 9-10. AFTER
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SIEZING POWER, THEY WOULD CALL FOR ELECTIONS WITHIN A MAXIMUM PERIOD OF ONE YEAR. LOPEZ ASKED SILES FOR THE UDP'S TACIT COOPERATION, NON-INTERFEENCE OR APPROVAL, BUT SILES, WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPLICATONS FOR DEMOCRATIZATION, DEMURRED.

5. AFTER HIS MEETING WITH LOPEZ, SILES CONSULTED WITH HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS. UPON FURTHER INVESTIGATION, HE LEARNED THAT THE COUP MOVEMENT WAS ACTUALLY TWO-HEADED. THE OTHER LEADER WAS ARMY MAJOR ROLANDO SARAVIA; AN INVETERATE PLOTTER, SARAVIA, LIKE LOPEZ, EXPECTED TO EMERGE AS STRONG MAN IN A NEW RULING JUNTA. SILES ALSO DISCOVERED THAT ARMY LTC HUMBERTO CAYOJA (CHIEF OF ARMED FORCES OPERATIONS) AND RETIRED GENERALJUAN AYOROA (OF THE TOPATER CIVIL-MILITARY GROUP) HAD BEEN INFORMED ABOUT THE COP PLANS, AND SUPPORTED THEM. IN ADDITION, HE LARNED THAT GENERATIONALIST LEADER LTC JORGE ECHAZU, CHIEF OF ARMY INTELLIGENCE, WAS AWARE OF THE PLOT, BT HAD URGED THAT IT BE POSTPONED FOR ABOUT A MONTH WHILE CONDITIONS RIPENED.

6. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER SILES MIGHT HAVE BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO SUCH MOVE, HE WAS NOW CONVINED THAT PEREDA TRULY INTENDED TO RETURN BOLIVIA TO DEMOCRATIC RULE WITHIN A REASONABLE TIEMFRAME. CONSEQUENTLY, HE REALIZED THAT HIS

OWN INTERESTS AND THOSE OF HIS COALITION WOULD BE BEST SERVED IF THE COUP ATTEMPT WERE BLOCKED. WITH THIS VIEW, A SILES ADVISER APPROACHED AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH READY ACCESS TO PEREDA. EMPLOYING THE GOOD OFFICES OF FINANCE MINISTER JORGE TAMAYO, A SILES-PEREDA MEETING WAS HASTILY ARRANGED. THERE IS NO INDICATION THAT SILES EVER BROACHED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE COUP WITH PEREDA. BUT ORUR UDP CONTACT BELIEVES THAT THE SPECTACLE OF THE TWO BREAKING BREAD WAS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN DISSUADING THE PLOTTERS FROM FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH THEIR PLANS.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WE HAVE RECEIVED SOME CORROBORATION, ELEMENTS OF THE ABOVE ACCOUNT MAY NOT BE ENTIRELY ACCURATE. WHAT APPEARS CERTAIN HOWEVER, IS THAT THERE WAS AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT PLOT BREWING AMONG THE GENERATIONALISTS LAST WEEK. CONFIDENTIAL

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WHILE THE COUP NEVER MATERIALIZED, IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT THE DISCONTENT WHICH ENGENDERED IT REMAINS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PEREDA HAS LEARNED ABOUT THE COUP PLANS, BUT MAY NOT HAVE ALL THE DETAILS. AT THE MOMENT, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHAT HE PLANS TO DO TO DIIP THEE GENERATIONALISTS IN LINE. UNDOUBTEDLY, THOUGH, HE NOW VIEWS THEM AS A SERIOUS THREAT TO HIS GOVERNMENT, AS DO WE. ONE LIKELY RESULT IS THAT PEREDA WILL FEEL UNDER INCREASED PRESSURE TO SET A DATE FOR NEW ELECTIONS; HIS BEST DEFENSE AGAINST COUPS IS TO PLACE HIMSELF IN THE VANGUARD OF DEMOCRATIZATION PLANS, CAST HIS MILITARY OPPONENTS IN THE ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOLD. BOEKER

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